

HOMELESS Council wants Soup Kitchen used as a temporary shelter

By JOAN RAYMOND

Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — Six City Council members Tuesday agreed to put in a good word with the city zoning administrator for the St. Francis Catholic soup kitchen proposal for a temporary shelter for homeless persons.

With Joe Ghio dissenting, council members voted 6-1 to recommend that the zoning administrator "favorably consider" a permit for the use of the soup kitchen as a shelter for as long as 90 days. Pregnant women, children and the elderly are to be given first priority, council members decided.

Councilwoman Mardi Wormhoudt authored the proposal, saying a temporary shelter should be established to give the homeless a respite from the cold and rain.

Ghio questioned the legality of Wormhoudt's proposal. He noted that the zoning administrator plans to consider Peter Carota's permit request without a public hearing.

The council decision does nothing "that wouldn't have happened anyway" except to play politics, Ghio told council members.

Under questioning from Ghio, Planning Director Peter Katzlberger said no public hearing is required for temporary uses such as the shelter proposal. Associate City Attorney Neal Anderson said the council decision is not a violation of the city charter.

The decision was made after Shelter Project Coordinator Paul Brindel told council members there are beds going unused in existing shelters. On one recent night, he reported, 16 of 47 available "legal" shelter beds were not used. If "illegal" beds are counted, there are 65 beds in the county's various shelters, he said.

Homeless jam shelters as winter approaches

By The Associated Press

As the nation sits down to Thanksgiving dinner, tens of thousands of Americans without a dinner table of their own will head to public shelters and charity kitchens for the best meal they've had in weeks.

They are the homeless — families, often headed by women, who can no longer afford rising rents and utilities; unskilled transients who drift from town to town in search of work; the mentally ill released from institutions with no one to look after them.

For them, Thanksgiving is a mixed blessing, providing both a

decent meal and a reminder of the tough winter days ahead.

Their numbers are on the rise in many cities, social service administrators say, because of an increasing shortage of low-cost housing, depressed economies in some areas and a lack of job skills that make it impossible for them to break the cycle of poverty.

"We offer survival kits — food and blankets — instead of giving them mending kits, so they can get jobs and education and re-enter society," says the Rev. Carl Resener, director of the Union Mission in Nashville, Tenn.

New York City's shelters are

Please see back of section

Brindel said he was "not sure" why the beds were empty. He estimated that the homeless population here ranges from 500 to 2,000.

Women and children are given first priority, "even if we are over our legal limit," Brindel told council members. Wormhoudt added she believed there are women and children out on the streets without shelter.

On Wormhoudt's recommendation, council members tied a permit approval to a condition the phone numbers of all other shelters be posted at the soup kitchen.

Brindel said there have been communication problems among various agencies involved in addressing shelter issues — the county Task

Force on the Homeless, the county Human Resources Agency, shelter providers and mental-health programs.

"The task force hasn't had the input as to all that's going on and has been operating in the dark," Brindel said. In addition, he said, the task force and Human Resources Commission meetings were both scheduled this week for exactly the same time, making it impossible for interested people to attend both meetings.

But Brindel said communications are starting to improve.

Councilwoman Katy Sears-Williams lamented that the city has no

Please see back of section

Soup Kitchen

Continued from Page A1
representation on the county Task Force, even though several hundred homeless persons live on the city streets.

Sears-Williams noted a previous city-county task force "fell apart" recently.

She also noted how she had recommended last year the formation of a task force, but council members would not follow her recommendation.

"I'm really upset. Today the county task force has no city representation," Sears-Williams told her colleagues.

Under questioning from Sears-Williams, Brindel reported the shelter situation "is generally not getting any better for single men."

More shelter is available for single women, he said.

Carota said the Soup Kitchen is now sending a voting representative to the Shelter Project board, but he stressed the involvement is on a voluntary basis only. Previously, Carota had objected to being required to sit on the board as a condition of approval for a shelter permit.

"We will work together, I believe," Carota told council members.

Sears-Williams failed to convince

council members to start a committee to coordinate shelter plans with other cities in California. A statewide network is needed, she said, because all cities — not just Santa Cruz — have problems housing the homeless.

Councilman John Laird objected, saying he opposed a "competing" committee to the county task force.

He told Sears-Williams to "take your own time and energy" to get her proposal going.

Rebutted Sears-Williams: "I'm not going to spend time on a project if I know there are four votes against me going in to it." She was referring to majority members Laird, Wormhoudt, Jane Weed and Michael Rotkin.

Sears-Williams recommended two council members be appointed to a committee to work on the proposal. The recommendation did not pass.

Instead, council members unanimously passed a recommendation from Laird directing a "plan of action" from Sears-Williams.

"It's going to be brief," she replied.

Council members agreed unanimously to send a letter from the mayor to the task force, asking task force members how to "incorporate our cooperation" on the task force and to encourage other cities in the county to participate.